



File: 1950

Date: 6/17/2021

## LETTER TO FILE:

### Great America Outdoors Act (GAOA) NEPA Review Winter Trail Deferred Maintenance Glacier Ranger District

This work involves deferred maintenance and brushing on six winter trails: Williwaw Nature Trail; INHT Turnagain Pass Snowmachine Trail; INHT Turnagain Pass Trail; Tincan Secondary Ski Trail; INHT Wagon Road Trail; INHT Johnson Pass Trail. Spot brushing will occur as necessary throughout the lengths of these trails. This work will reestablish the trail corridor in segments where the brush has grown beyond the capacity of routine maintenance work to keep clear. There will be no work that occurs outside the trail corridor, and there will be no ground disturbing activities associated with this project. Work will be conducted by Forest Service crews and will involve the use of chainsaws and gas-powered brush saws. These are winter trails; hence, the best access is often in the winter months. However, planned project start date may be as early as is June 23, 2021.

The following Forest Service Resource Specialists reviewed the project proposal:

Peter Frank, Ecology  
Adam Cross, Fisheries  
Sherry Kime, Heritage  
Angela Coleman, Hydrology  
Scott Leslie, Minerals  
Jason Stancil, Recreation  
Jennifer Richter, Soils  
Becky Jones, Wildlife

Based on the review of the project proposal the following stipulations will be included in the project plan:

#### *Ecology*

1. The hand tools and motorized equipment used during the maintenance, should be cleaned and free of dirt and plant material before commencing work.

#### *Fisheries*

1. Use best management practices (BMPs) as described in agency technical guides and handbooks to minimize adverse impacts to soils and water resources during the planning and implementation of all ground disturbing forest activities. (Consult the National Core BMPs Technical Guide FS-990a and Chapter 10 of the Alaska Region Soil and Water Conservation Handbook, FSH 2509.22.) [Standard]
2. CNFLMP (2020) page 49, Table 10 provides the following guidance for riparian management zone width delineations. [Standard]  
Lakes, ponds and open water wetlands distance of 100 feet from the shoreline  
Stream class I and II: a distance of 100 feet from the shoreline,  
Riparian vegetation or associated wetland fens: 100 feet from the shoreline



3. No commercial timber harvest or wood product removal is allowed within the riparian management zones delineations listed in table 10. Manage an appropriate distance beyond the no-harvest zone to provide for a reasonable assurance of wind-firmness of the riparian management zone (pay special attention to the area within one-site potential tree height of the riparian management zone. [Standard]
4. Extraction of mineral materials (such as sand, gravel, and rock) should not occur within riparian management zones to protect terrestrial and aquatic resources associated with riparian management zones. Exceptions may occur for aquatic enhancement projects and trail projects where barrow pits (not more than 10 feet in diameter) may be necessary along trails. [Standard]
5. Within the riparian management zone's (Table 10, 2020 CNFLMP page 49), authorized management actions and activities should be designed to maintain a distance of 100 feet from lake shoreline.
6. Water impoundments, water diversions, and instream channel work should either maintain water levels or instream flows that are designed to maintain:
  - A. Water quality.
  - B. Invertebrate food production.
  - C. Adequate riparian and streambank vegetation and wood to maintain stream bank integrity, dissipate energy during high flow events and buffer sediment delivery to waterbodies.
  - D. Natural stream channel processes and aquatic habitat complexity.
  - E. Long-term riparian biodiversity and productivity. [Guideline]
7. Locate and design recreation trails to minimize sedimentation impacts to freshwater. Where stream crossings are unavoidable, the crossing approaches should include structures that minimize sedimentation, such as waterbars, ditches, berms, and runoff zones. [Guideline]
8. Prescribe measures as needed to ensure the natural range and frequency of aquatic habitat conditions are either maintained or restored within essential fish habitat. [Guideline]
9. Conduct management actions within or adjacent to fish-bearing waterbodies outside of seasonal timing windows for fish and wildlife species. [Guideline]

### *Hydrology*

Apply Best Management Practices to include:

1. Minimize vegetation removal within the riparian management zones where possible. Trees that need to be felled within the riparian management zones should be felled toward the stream and left whole. No limbing is necessary if felled instream.
2. Use suitable measures to avoid or minimize impacts to the waterbody when implementing construction and maintenance activities.
  - a. Minimize bank and riparian area excavation during construction to the extent practicable.
  - b. Keep excavated materials out of the waterbody.
  - c. Remove all project debris from the waterbody in a manner that will cause the least disturbance.
  - d. Contour site to disperse runoff, minimize erosion, stabilize slopes, and provide a favorable environment for plant growth.
3. Refuel and store fuel and equipment well away from the AMZ (riparian), groundwater recharge areas, and waterbodies.
4. Use suitable measures to avoid spilling fuels, lubricants, cleaners and other chemicals during handling and transporting.
5. Minimize travel within the riparian management zones to protect riparian vegetation and stream banks from trampling and degradation.



### *Recreation*

1. Assure that Best Management Practices are used to avoid potential unplanned disturbances outside of the planned project area.

### *Wildlife*

1. Project is in bear habitat. During project implementation, ensure that human and pet food, garbage, and odorous attractants (fuel) is attended by humans or stored in a bear resistant manner when not being used (bear cans or lockers, containment barrels or inside of vehicles). Garbage shall be removed daily.
2. To prevent disturbance to goshawks:
  - Avoid disturbance within a 660-foot radius of goshawk nests during the active nesting season (March 1 through July 31).
  - If an active goshawk nest is found within 660 feet of the project area during project activities, the wildlife biologist shall be notified as soon as possible and provide direction on how to proceed
3. To prevent disturbance to bald eagles:
  - Avoid clear cutting and removal of overstory trees within 330 feet of a nest.
  - Avoid disturbing nesting eagles within 660 feet of the nest during the breeding season (March 1 through August 31).
  - If an active bald eagle nest is found within 660 feet of the project area during project activities, the wildlife biologist shall be notified as soon as possible and provide direction on how to proceed.
4. To prevent disturbance to osprey:
  - Avoid disturbance within 330 feet of active osprey nesting sites during the nesting period (April 20 through July 15).
  - If an active osprey nest is found within 660 feet of the project area during project activities, the wildlife biologist shall be notified as soon as possible and provide direction on how to proceed.
5. To mitigate disturbance to nesting migratory birds:
  - When possible, avoid vegetation clearing, site preparation, or other vegetation removal activities during the breeding season of migratory birds from May 1 – July 15 on Trail Class 1 and Trail Class 2 trails. NOTE: Brushing of trails and vegetation removal may need to occur during the nesting window when personnel and equipment are available, however, efforts should be made to operate outside the identified time frame.
    - Tincan Secondary Ski Trail: TC 2-MODERATELY DEVELOPED o
    - INHT Wagon Road Trail: TC 2-MODERATELY DEVELOPED o
    - Williwaw Nature Trail: TC 2-MODERATELY DEVELOPED/TC 4-HIGHLY DEVELOPED
    - INHT Turnagain Pass Snowmachine Trail: TC 3- DEVELOPED
    - INHT Turnagain Pass Trail: TC 3- DEVELOPED o INHT Johnson Pass Trail: TC 3- DEVELOPED



### *Heritage*

1. FS Archaeologist Sherry Kime discussed this project in an informal Teams meeting with SHPO office Review and Compliance Staff Sarah Meitl on May 20. Both parties agreed that since the trails have been previously surveyed (R1996100410011; R2009100410012; R2001100410013; R1994100430079; R2010100400021) and no historic features are present other than the trails themselves that are associated with the INHT, and since there will be no ground disturbance, the PA can be used under Appendix B(III) Routine Maintenance related to transportation where there is little or no potential to affect historic properties. **This project will result in a finding of No Adverse Effects to historic properties.**

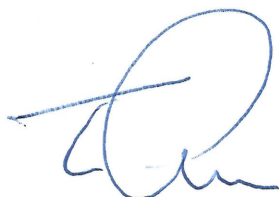
The Glacier Ranger District Winter trails lie within the inventoried roadless area 1B. The proposed activities are consistent with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR294, published January 12, 2001).

36 CFR 220.6 indicates that repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries may be covered under category (d) *Categories of actions for which a project or case file and decision memo are not required. A supporting record and a decision memo are not required, but at the discretion of the responsible official, may be prepared for the following categories...*

(4) *Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries. Examples include but are not limited to:*

- (i) *Authorizing a user to grade, resurface, and clean the culverts of an established NFS road;*
- (ii) *Grading a road and clearing the roadside of brush without the use of herbicides;*
- (iii) *Resurfacing a road to its original condition;*
- (iv) *Pruning vegetation and cleaning culverts along a trail and grooming the surface of the trail; and*
- (v) *Surveying, painting, and posting landline boundaries.*

Based on the direction 36 CFR 220.6, I believe this categorical exclusion is appropriate and this letter serves as documentation of that determination.



TIM CHARNON  
GLACIER DISTRICT RANGER

